

dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the

Ministry of Community and Social Services



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University of Toronto

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Our minister visits field staff

Community and Social Services Minister Janet Ecker visited field offices in southeastern Ontario during a two-day tour November 21 and 22. She visited the Belleville and Brockville local offices as well as the Ottawa Area Office. This was one of her first opportunities to meet staff outside Queen's Park since becoming minister in August.



Merton Elliott/Brockville

Here, the minister (right) is seen with Ernie Nelson, Kingston Area Office manager, and Gloria Shaw, income maintenance manager in Brockville.

"Wrap-around" service model outlined at joint gathering

by Julia Naczynski

Local community-based programming, services developed with input from actual consumers and "wrap-around" services tailored to the needs of clients and their families will be the future of human services, those attending a two-day forum on integration learned.

The forum, jointly sponsored by MCSS and the Ministry of Health Sept. 25 and 26, brought together about 120 policy and senior staff to learn from consultants who have been developing human services in the United States, mainly in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Suzanne Hamilton and Carol Appathurai of the Children's Services Branch helped to organize the joint gathering, which was attended by Deputy Minister Sandra Lang and other senior and policy staff.

Collaboration among ministries and among service providers will become mandatory in the effort to create a seamless system without gaps or duplications in service, said John VanDenBerg, a child psychologist with the Community Partnerships Group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Jointly-sponsored forums such as this one, in which government staff and service providers participate, are a start toward that goal, he noted, but added, "meetings are not collaboration."

One of the problems with a fragmented system is that service providers try to fit people into programs instead of doing it the other way around and developing programs that meet people's needs, said Dr. VanDenBerg. "Then, if they don't fit



John VanDenBerg

the programs, we call them dysfunctional."

One of the rules of a consumer-directed system is that you never plan a service without first asking the consumers what they need, said Paul Carling, the executive director of the Centre for Community Change at Trinity College in Burlington, Vermont, who has extensive experience in restructuring. "Ask the consumers how they would like that need met," he suggested; often, the ideas from consumers are practical, low-cost or even no-cost.

The other two rules of a consumer-directed system: Never start a service without fully involving consumers as partners in its planning and staffing; and never continue a service unless the outcomes and consumer satisfaction justify doing so, said Paul.

Dr. VanDenBerg also talked about the importance of including consumers, such as the child and family, in the service plan. "It's the

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An update on Ontario Works

by Julia Naczynski



Julia Naczynski photo

Work groups came up with ideas and shared "best practices" at the Nov. 7 joint meeting of Ontario Works staff and municipal representatives. Seated, from left, is Louise Lamarche of our North Bay District Office; Nancy Anderson of the Mississauga Area Office; Linda Lunney of the Kenora/Rainy River District Office and Doug Hill for the City of North Bay; standing is Lucy Brown of Kent County.

Municipal representatives from the first sites gathered at Queen's Park on Nov. 7 for a joint meeting with provincial staff to share ideas and get an update on the progress of Ontario Works.

At the meeting, staff and representatives learned that more than half of the 20 first sites for Ontario Works have had their business plans approved, with several more under technical review.

Some key policy decisions are to be made so that draft legislation can be prepared for the spring, said Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Kevin Costante. Some of the issues that will affect the implementation of Ontario Works are:

- the outcome of the recommendations of the Who Does What Panel, chaired by former Toronto mayor David Crombie. The panel has recommended that social assistance be delivered by a single tier of government; currently, responsibility is shared between the province and municipalities;
- the design of an income support plan for people with disabilities and seniors. The plan is intended to move people with disabilities and seniors off welfare and into a program of

their own that meets their specific needs and protects their benefits.

- the extension of requirements to sole-support parents with older children.

An information exchange was moderated by Director of Employment Programs Clioinda McMullin, and by Alf Spencer, Director of Income Maintenance for Hamilton Wentworth Regional Social Services.

The 90-plus representatives from our first-site area offices and municipalities then broke into work groups to exchange ideas and solutions.

Here are some examples of "best practices" highlighted during the day:

- provision of one-stop access to a broader range of employment services by sharing a location with Human Resources Development Canada (formerly Canada Employment Centres), and/or other employment services;
- provision of training to community partners (organizations providing placements) on standards to be met, including labour statutes;
- asking the community agencies that sponsor placements to furnish participants with letters of reference they can use to find regular employment.

Calling all Syl Apps staff

A committee has been struck to organize a reunion to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Syl Apps in 1997.

The committee needs your help in obtaining the mailing addresses for former employees.

The organizers would like to obtain as many names and addresses as possible by the beginning of the new year in order to mail invitations. At this point the committee is aiming at a date in late spring of 1997 for the reunion.

Donna Pennal is maintaining the mailing list and can be reached in Oakville at 905-844-7786, ext. 4274 or by e-mail at PENNAL_D on nodes FTRC1B or AMIS1A.

A quit-smoking program for a special group of smokers

by Jack Stiff, Communications and Marketing Branch

Up to 20 per cent of people with developmental disabilities in institutional settings smoke, a recent survey by epidemiologist **Hélène Ouellette-Kuntz** of Queen's University in Kingston shows.

While smoking is a personal choice, it's fraught with risks, not only to the smokers' health, but to others around them and their environment.

The Penrose Centre, an institutional facility for people with developmental disabilities, is part of Ongwanda in Kingston. Penrose will close next spring, and its residents will move into new homes in the community. How, then, to balance the requirements of clients who smoke with those of non-smoking clients and staff?



Hélène Ouellette-Kuntz

Hélène and **Marilyn Rawding**, a research assistant with Queen's University, work with Ongwanda. About two years ago, they were asked to try to get some Ongwanda clients to quit smoking. The resulting program was outlined at a workshop as part of Ongwanda's annual conference on Nov. 8, which this year had the theme "Who Is Responsible? Lifestyle and Health in the Next Millennium."

The risk of fire in facilities is small due to the provision of sprinkler systems, fire alarms and around-the-clock supervision. But in community settings, the incidence of fire can be much greater.

There are many good quit-smoking programs for the public, but most are "too high-functioning for the majority



Marilyn Rawding

of our clients," says Marilyn. "All of these programs presume literacy. We

"I want to stress that this program is not intended to restrict choice by not allowing participants to smoke. On the contrary, we want to increase choice by making participants aware of risks and alternatives, and supporting them in adopting responsible behaviours."

—Hélène Ouellette-Kuntz

The program consists of eight sessions and is interactive to keep participants interested.

At the end of the program, four of the 19 smokers decided to quit smoking, and all were successful (after six months, they hadn't smoked). Nine of the remaining 15 smokers reduced their nicotine intake. Five of these smokers had completely switched to herbal cigarettes for a period of months.

The smoking-cessation program developed for Ongwanda has five goals:

- to reduce the risk of burns to the smoker, to others and to property by teaching safe smoking practices;
- to increase the participant's knowledge of fire prevention and fire safety;
- to increase the participant's knowledge of ill-health effects of tobacco to smokers and to those exposed to second-hand smoke;
- to help participants recognize the improved quality of life available to them if they do not smoke; and
- to help participants identify alternatives to smoking.

"Wrap-around" service model

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difference between doing things to people and doing things with people," he said. "Ask: 'What does the child, the family and the neighbourhood need to live a better life?' — and wrap services around them."

The needs of kids who are in the child welfare, mental health and juvenile justice systems are not very different, he said. "But remember that needs are different from services," he cautioned.

PLAIN LANGUAGE PLEASE

Why use plain language? There are three objectives:

1. To increase efficiency.

Plain language is a proven tool to help reduce errors, speed information processing and save staff from answering unnecessary questions. Saving costs and time means that our resources are used more efficiently. The government will benefit from these efficiencies and cost savings over the long term.

2. To improve customer service and the work environment.

Documents that are difficult to read make it difficult for public servants to do their job. Clearly-written communications — both external and internal — will make it easier for employees to communicate with and help our customers.

3. To improve access to our services.

The greatest number of people should be able to easily read and understand forms, correspondence, policies, instructions and information about government services. All residents of Ontario should be able to understand written messages from the government.

To sum up: plain language saves time, money and effort for everyone.

United Way events offer variety

United Way campaigns got under way in ministry workplaces in October. In Toronto, our Legal Services Branch was well-represented by a team that climbed the "mile-high" CN Tower stairs in return for pledges to United Way. Among them was, from left, Alana Page, Karina Saccà, Cindy Crandall, Susan Freeborn, Vera Payea, Maryke Vandermeiden and MCSS United Way chair Norm Mohamid.

In Smiths Falls, Rideau Regional Centre marked its 10th anniversary United Way campaign with a multitude of events. Chair Nancy Lewis, along with staffers Garry Dalgleish, Denise Mall and Alison Kaczan, organized a campaign for about 1,000 full- and part-time staff. Events included a Christmas craft fair, beach volleyball tournament, a barbecue and, as seen in the photo, a pancake breakfast that included children from Rideau's child care centre as attendees; that's Gina Brady, RRC recreation instructor, handing out balloons to the kids.



Lyne Kishinevsky photo



Suzanne Egan photo

Residents also participate through special events such as the annual Red and White Dance and a United Way coffeehouse.

Adoption reform to be studied

Adoption practitioners from throughout Ontario learned that the ministry is examining its core businesses with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness, and that adoption services are part of this exercise.

Susan Parr, a policy analyst with the Children's Services Branch, told those attending the Adoption Resource Exchange training day for adoption workers Oct. 29 that the



Susan Parr

Adoption Reform Project will look at service delivery issues. A working group is forming that includes Susan, her fellow policy analyst **Joan Belford**, **John Calcott** from Legal Services Branch, **Pat O'Brien** and **Rich Partridge** from the Adoption Unit, as well as representatives from adoption practitioners in child welfare and private adoption.

The coming restructuring of social services has prompted this examination of the kind of adoption services Ontario should have, who should provide them and how they should be delivered, Susan told the gathering, which included representatives from the 55 children's aid societies (CASS) in

Ontario, private adoption licensees and social workers. (A licensee is a person who holds a license issued by the ministry under the Child and Family Services Act to place children for adoption.)

Among many issues, the working group will examine:

- extending fee-charging for adoption services, such as home studies, applications and counselling done through CASS. Private practitioners already charge fees for these, but legislation prohibits CASS from doing so.
- more openness in the adoption process which would make it easier for adult adoptees to find their birth families, and for birth parents to be involved in the adoption process for the child they are giving up. Again, Susan noted that some other jurisdictions have changed their laws to allow greater openness (British Columbia law changed on Nov. 4).
- overseas adoption of children, who often are similar in terms of special needs or handicaps to children who already live in Ontario and are waiting to be adopted.
- what role the ministry should play in the future delivery of adoption services.

Susan said the working group is in its initial stages and will be conducting consultations during the winter, with a view to having recommendations and an implementation plan ready in the spring. The group is looking at a broad range of options and will be inviting a variety of groups representing service providers, adoptees and birth and adoptive parents to comment on these options, she said.

Julia Naczynski is the editor of Dialogue and the writer for Today's Child, a ministry-sponsored newspaper column that features children available for adoption, most of them children who have special needs.

Take Our Kids To Work™



The Hawkesbury Local Office hosted **Emmanuel (Manou) Charlebois** on Take Our Kids to Work Day. Manou is the nephew of

Family Benefits case analyst **Martine Turpin**. As part of his day, Manou, a Grade 9 student at Hawkesbury Regional High School, learned such office basics as how to send e-mail and use a multi-function photocopier. He also spent part of the day with young offender probation officer **Serge Lavigne**. Here, Manou is seen helping his aunt prepare a calendar of tasks that need to be done in 1997. Manou's ambition is to have a career in business marketing as well as maintaining his passion for in-line skating.

Families for the child with special needs

No child is unadoptable, even those with special needs, adoption professionals learned at Training Day of the Adoption Resource Exchange.

The number of children with special needs who are available for adoption is continually rising, so this topic was of special interest to the 275 adoption professionals attending the Oct. 29th training day as part of the ministry-sponsored Adoption Resource Exchange at Queen's Park.

The featured speaker was **Drenda Lakin**, director of the internationally-respected Spaulding for Children National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption in Southfield, Michigan.



Drenda Lakin

The Spaulding Center's definition of "special needs" covers not only children who have physical or developmental handicaps, but older children, sibling groups, children from visible minorities and children of ethnicity or cultural diversity.

Spaulding, which is one of only six national centres in the U.S. for children and families, believes that every child deserves a permanent family, Drenda told a rapt audience. The centre also believes that anyone

can become a good adoptive parent if given the proper training and support.

Children with special needs often have complex needs and the average age of placement, which used to be 10, is now 12, said Drenda. Because of this, there is a growing demand for post-adoption services such as counselling and parenting-skills training. But in the United States, as here in Canada, there is no formal structure for post-adoptive services; families may see a psychologist about behaviour problems, then a counselling agency, and so on.

Families have responded by creating their own networks, such as the Parent Network for the Post-Institutionalized Child based in Pennsylvania, said Drenda.

Others who have adopted a child through their state, and felt that they were not sufficiently informed about the extent of the child's background and problems, have sued for "wrongful adoption," said Drenda. Still others, desperate for help they cannot get any other way, have claimed that they are neglecting the child in order to force the authorities to take the child into the service system, she said.

These cases have emphasized the need to prepare families in advance of adoption. Spaulding offers an eight-session orientation; the training includes "cultural competence" for those who are adopting a child of another race or culture.

Other supports might include a "buddy" or "mentor" family who can share adoption experiences.

The state of Wisconsin has developed an introductory course in adoptive parenting through a technical college, and adoption-worker training available on CD-ROM is going to be used in-house by Spaulding staff, said Drenda.

Kids at Casa Loma

Tatters the Clown (a.k.a. Jack Staff of Kiwanis and MCSS's Communications and Marketing Branch) mystified children with magic tricks at a special event held at the landmark Casa Loma.

The Toronto "castle" was the site for a special event in September. The Kiwanis Club of



Casa Loma, which owns and has operated the attraction since 1937, held a

private party for kids with special needs. Many of the children who attended were selected with the help of the ministry's Toronto Area Office and by Tent 28 (Toronto) of the Variety Club, the world's largest children's charity.

Michael Kurlt left his position as Director of Communications and Marketing Branch on Sept. 27 to begin a new career as Director of Public Relations at the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care in Toronto. Peter Taylor is the acting director of CMB. Also in CMB, Dave Rudan decided to retire after 26 years with the ministry in communications.



Michael Kurlt

Angela Forest became Director of Information Systems Branch Nov. 18. She comes to us from Management Board of Cabinet.



Angela Forest

The former Corporate Services Division under ADM Lynn MacDonald has been restructured and will be called the Business Planning and Corporate Services Division. The former Financial and Capital Planning Branch and the former Finance and Administrative Services Branch have been merged, to be called Financial Planning and Business Management Branch.

The Northern Area Office and

the Sudbury District Office moved from 10 Elm St. in Sudbury on Oct. 24. This move consolidates all ministry offices in Sudbury in one building, at 199 Larch St., Sudbury P3E 5P9. Here are the floor locations and numbers: — Northern Area Office, 10th floor (area manager, finance unit, human resources, systems); business number, 705-675-6699; back-door number 705-675-4571; fax 705-688-3099.

— Sudbury District Office, 6th floor (district manager, community programs, probation, vocational rehabilitation services); business number, 705-675-8153; back-door number 705-675-4571; fax 705-688-3153.

— Sudbury District Office, 5th floor (income maintenance); business, 705-675-4515; back-door 705-675-4571; fax 705-675-2163. The Sudbury Local Office is still on the 5th floor.

The Comprehensive Audit and Investigations Branch has moved from 2195 Yonge St. to 2 Bloor St. W., 30th floor, Toronto M7A 1E9. Staff are now part of the HCSDIA computer node, so although telephone numbers remain the same, e-mail addresses must have the @HCSDIA at the end. You should make this change to your mailing lists and e-mail distribution lists.

Dialogue takes FORUM award

Our staff newsletter was given a Bronze Award at the Annual Communicators' FORUM Awards Festival, a competition that celebrates excellence in the field of government communications.

Dialogue has been a consistent winner for a number of years in the category for best internal publication (three consecutive issues). The award was presented at an awards ceremony in Toronto on Oct. 30.

Communicators' FORUM is a voluntary organization for professionals in communications in the Ontario government.



IN MEMORIAM: Louise-Anne Ranstead



Louise-Anne Ranstead

Louise-Anne Ranstead, Area Manager of the Mississauga Area Office, passed away peacefully at her home in Scarborough on

September 28, 1996 after many years of dedicated public service. She was 54.

Louise-Anne held the position of Area Manager in the Mississauga Area Office from October 1993. Prior to that, she had a distinguished career with Management Board and the Ministry of Finance. Louise-Anne very much enjoyed her work with MCSS and valued the opportunity of contributing to social services.

Louise-Anne will be fondly remembered by her family, MCSS staff and the many friends and colleagues throughout the Ontario Public Service.

dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

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